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Food security and diets in urban Asia : How resilient are food systems in times of Covid 19 ?

An analysis and characterization
of 8 urban food systems in selected cities in Asia

Authorship

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Disclaimer

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of WFP nor Dikoda.

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About Dikoda

We provide nutrition focused impact solutions, technical support and actionable insight for the public and private sector. Our technical focus is addressing malnutrition in urban areas. Our geographical focus is in Asia and the Pacific.

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Abbreviations

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GAIN Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

GHSL Global Human Settlements Layer

IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

NGO Non-government organization

SDFU Status and Determinants of Food insecurity and Undernutrition

SME Small or medium-sized enterprise

UN United Nations

VAM Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping

WFP World Food Programme

WRA Women of Reproductive Age

Notes

This report provides an analysis and characterization of urban food system across 8 selected cities in Asia. This research is the Component 1 (C1) of a series of knowledge building products supported by Dikoda. Additional components include:

- Component 2 (C2) 4 deep dive case studies that aim to 1) provide rich in depth examples to feed into the evidence on nutrition-specific and sensitive interventions in poor urban areas to promote food security and prevent malnutrition, 2) provide an opportunity to evaluate urban interventions, learn from the process and offer collaboration opportunities for WFP to support upgrading and scaling up.
- Component 3 (C3) rapid market assessment in 3 selected cities that aim to 1) understand the market environment and stakeholders in the urban contexts, 2) specifically focusing on informal food sector actor, characterize their offer and their level of resilience during COVID-19.

The outputs from C1 to C3 can be shared upon request by WFP or Dikoda's team.

Executive summary

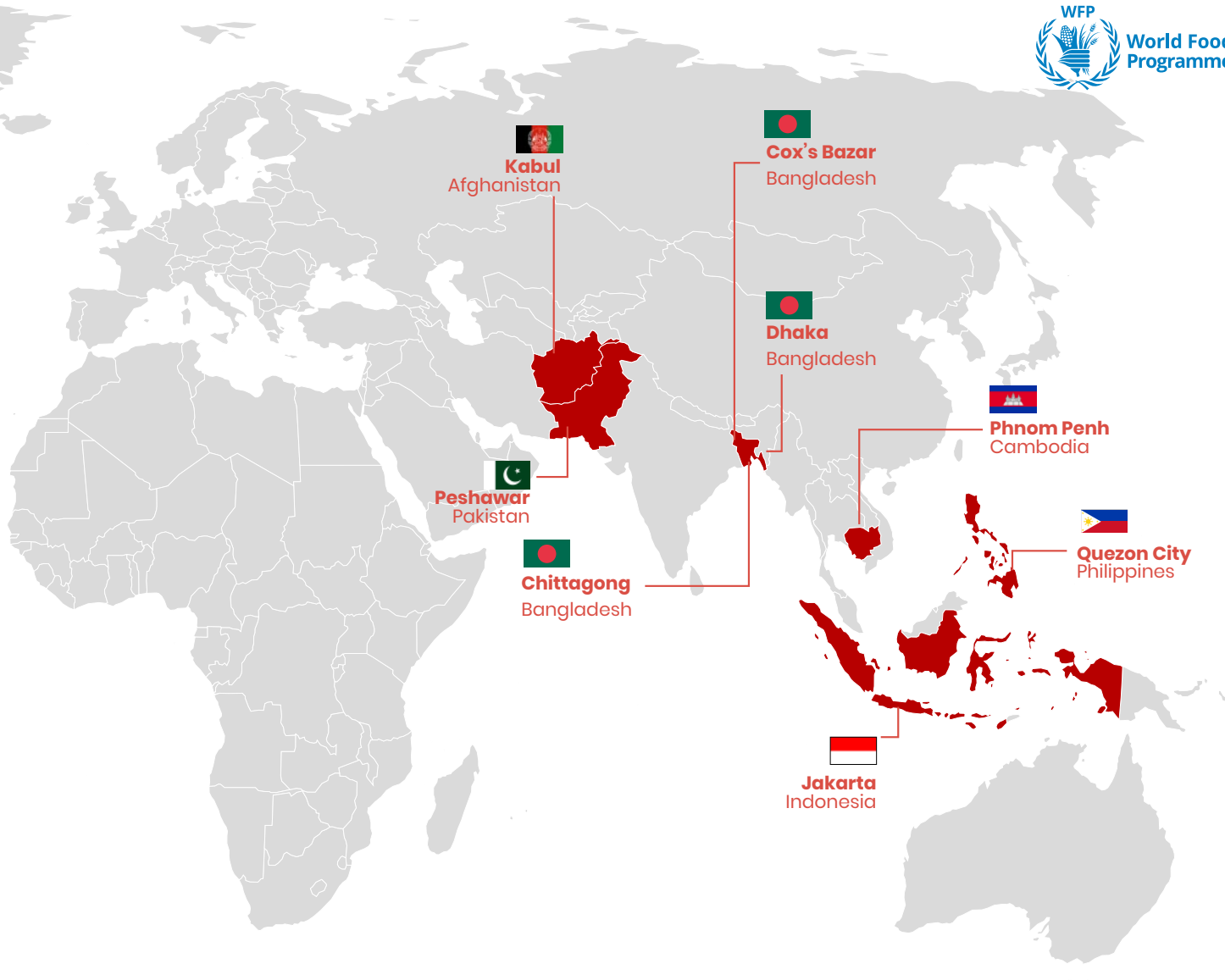
Vulnerable populations in urban areas globally have been among the worst hit by the global COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has upended normal life and the food systems that support urban populations have been significantly disrupted. To date, insufficient evidence exists on the impact on availability, access and use of foods for vulnerable urban populations. The gaps in evidence of urban food system weaknesses during the COVID-19 crisis, and the likely consequences on food security and nutrition in poor urban populations, requires better understanding urban to shape potential interventions for WFP.

This research study conducted between January and April 2021, assessed the level of resilience of urban food systems in the face of the COVID-19 crisis in eight selected cities in the Asia/Pacific region. It used a range of methods and data sources to characterize urban food systems and explored external drivers, food supply chains, food environments, individual factors, consumer behaviour and diet outcomes. The Food Systems Dashboard Framework¹ developed by Johns Hopkins University, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition and other international collaborators was used as the conceptual framework to guide the analysis. Key data sources were:

- 1) Primary quantitative data:** Surveys with urban food system stakeholders (n=2,528) including private sector, local government actors, UN agencies and NGOs.
- 2) Primary qualitative data:** Key informant interviews (n=30) with representatives from local government, UN agencies, national/international NGOs, Food Security and Nutrition Cluster Coordinators, private sector actors in the food industry and community-based organizations involved in supporting the food system during the pandemic.
- 3) Secondary data analysis:** Analysis of reports and online databases for selected indicators of vulnerability relating to components/outcomes of food systems and national Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data to produce city-level indicators.
- 4) Geospatial data:** Analysis of peer-reviewed urban datasets combined with primary data collection.

Eight cities were selected in collaboration with WFP Regional Bureau Bangkok and Country Offices in the region. Inclusion criteria were primarily based on where WFP Country Offices are located, to facilitate rapid data collection and networking

¹ The Food Systems Dashboard. Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and Johns Hopkins University. 2020. Geneva, Switzerland. <https://foodsystemsdashboard.org/>



with relevant stakeholders. Using the materials collected, we developed eight city briefs to provide snapshots of the city-level food systems and COVID-19 related impacts and vulnerabilities in the following cities:

Pre-COVID-19 data has been used to as a baseline to highlight vulnerability in the food system that existed before the crisis. The city briefs aim to provide meaningful comparison of data across cities, but some disparity in secondary data inevitably exists.

1. Chittagong, Bangladesh



A typology of resilience in urban food systems has been

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